

Recipes included at this site, except where noted, do not appear in  
*A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.*

April 2021

## THE POSSIBILITIES OF *RICOTTA* CHEESE:

Cheese Blintzes

Mixed Berry Parfaits with *Ricotta* – *Mascarpone* Cream

Puréed *Ricotta* Cheese Sauce

Roasted Red Pepper, *Ricotta*, and Walnut Dip  
with Horseradish

Russian Orthodox Easter Dessert

*Spaghettini* with Sicilian Eggplant – *Ricotta* Sauce

Italian Homemade *Ricotta* Cheese

Lavender Syrup

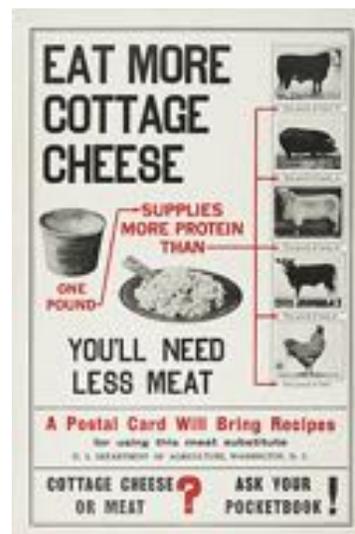
Lemon Syrup

Maple – Spice Sauce

Cottage cheeses persisted because these soft, unaged cheeses can be made in, yes, your little cottage. It is theorized that such cheese dates back as far as 3,100 BC when shepherds discovered solidified curd in the bags in which they stored the milk from their flocks. The enzymes present in the animal stomachs, from which the bags were made, started the cheese production by coagulating the curds. That, in a nutshell, is why another name for cottage cheese is “curds and whey.” So Little Miss Muffet was actually eating a bowl of cottage cheese when the spider settled in beside her . . . however, cottage cheese may not have been as poetic.

Historically, this type of cheese has always been used as a substitute for meat by the poor, by vegetarians, during religious fasting, and during wars. Our own government championed cottage cheese during World War I to reserve meat supplies for the troops as the poster from the period attests. Notice that they didn't emphasize patriotism for meat rationing as they did during World War II.

*Lasagne* is probably the most universally known of the Italian dishes that get their soft, sweetness from *ricotta* cheese. Whether you make your own or order it in a restaurant every chance you get, lasagna is special and the cheeses that make it so spectacular in Italy are *mozzarella di buffala* (water buffalo milk *mozzarella*), grated *pecorino Romano* made from ewes' milk, and freshly made *ricotta* cheese, made from ewe, cow, goat, or Italian water buffalo milk whey. I know, fat chance of making an authentic *lasagne* in my kitchen in Pennsylvania . . . but at least we can make our own *ricotta*, and ewes' milk *pecorino Romano* is imported to the United States from Italy and is available in well-stocked dairy/deli departments. I remember my mother starting a conversation with another shopper while waiting at the checkout of a grocery store in Tucson. The woman had lasagna noodles, cottage cheese, the green shaker box of parmesan cheese, and sliced Swiss cheese in her basket. My mother discerned that she was going to make lasagna, directed her to the “straight and narrow,” and held her place in line while she picked up the correct ingredients for her culinary adventure.



Cottage cheese is not the right cheese for a lasagna . . . that is the role of *ricotta* . . . *Ricotta* cheese, also a fresh, unaged cheese, evolved in quite a different way. The Italian word *recocta*, from which *ricotta* evolves, means “recooked.” Whey, left over from cheese making, can be acidulated to precipitate the remaining protein by creating an environment of low pH and high heat. The curd which precipitates is much finer than is the curd in cottage cheese and must be used within two or three days unlike cottage cheese which keeps far longer. In the United States milk is added during the production of *ricotta* resulting in the creamier product to which we have become accustomed. Italian-made *ricotta* was always grainier and often had a cottage cheese like tartness unlike its American counterpart which has a slight sweetness. We found American-style *ricotta* on most of our stops in Italy suggesting that a change may be taking place in favor of the creamier product we prefer. Take advantage of that for easy desserts by adding a drizzle of honey or vanilla syrup over a scoop of *ricotta*. Or, if preferred, use one of the sauces included here. A fresh lemon syrup is a glorious touch, probably my favorite. Emigration in the late nineteenth century into the twentieth from Naples, Calabria, and Sicily introduced America to the cooking of Southern Italy. Red sauce became the way to cook Italian. I’m sure you have had the opportunity to choose a white pizza. Have you ever considered a white sauce for pasta dishes? Of course you have; there is certainly a macaroni and cheese dish somewhere in your recipe file . . .



*Ricotta* can be salted, molded, and aged to form a *feta*-like cheese known as *ricotta salata* and is a convenient product, available in most deli departments.

Sometimes you are in a hurry and the store-bought *ricotta* will do just fine; sometimes you want the real thing. Making your own cheese is not hard but the rewards truly outweigh any effort. You don’t have to make it every time you want *ricotta* cheese but when you do make your own, you will, as have I, feel really good about your survival. For that reason, I have included my recipe for homemade *ricotta*.

## **CHEESE BLINTZES** *Blinchatrye Piroski s Tvorogom*

TPT - about 1 hour and 3 minutes;  
10 minutes = batter resting period

*I shall never forget the taste of the cheese blintzes and the potato cheese cutlets which we were served for breakfast during our late December trip to Russia. Nor will I forget the punch bowl-sized serving dishes in which jam and sour cream were served to be ladled over the blintzes and cutlets. For these reasons, I often turn to cheese blintzes during the holidays and since they can be frozen, they can be accessed quickly if I have had the foresight to make a batch or two early in the month.*



*“Tvorog,” the Russian cottage cheese from which these are made, is not available in the United States unless you make it yourself. Cottage and pot cheeses tend to be a bit too sour for our tastes. Drained ricotta approximates the texture and taste admirably.*

**CHEESE FILLING:**

- 1 cup (1/2 pound) *part-skimmed milk ricotta* cheese—*well-drained*, if necessary
- 2 tablespoons *fat-free* pasteurized eggs\*
- 1 1/2 teaspoons sugar
- 3/4 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

**CRÊPES:**

- 6 tablespoons *fat-free* pasteurized eggs
  - 1/4 cup plain yogurt
  - 1/3 cup skimmed milk
  - 1 1/2 teaspoons vegetable oil
  - 1/4 cup unbleached white flour
  - 2 tablespoons whole wheat flour
- 3/4 teaspoon butter—*melted*

1 tablespoon butter

Plain yogurt *or fat-free* sour cream, for garnish  
All-fruit jam *or* fruit sauce of choice, for garnish\*\*

In a large mixing bowl, combine *ricotta* cheese, 2 tablespoonfuls pasteurized eggs, sugar, and lemon juice. Using a wooden spoon, combine thoroughly. Refrigerate until required.

In a second large mixing bowl, combine 6 tablespoonfuls pasteurized eggs, yogurt, milk, and vegetable oil. Using a wire whisk, mix thoroughly. Add white and whole wheat flours and continue to beat until a smooth batter results. Set aside for about 10 minutes before proceeding.

Heat a 9-inch non-stick-coated skillet over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat. Brush some of the *melted* butter over surface. When hot, add about 1/4 cupful of batter and *tilt quickly* so that batter covers the pan surface evenly. Cook only until batter congeals but *do not allow to brown or become crisp*. Slide out of skillet and invert onto a platter. Prepare all *crêpes* in the same manner, brushing pan *lightly* with butter *if necessary*.

Fill *blintzes* by spreading 1/4 cupful of refrigerated cheese filling along one edge of cooked side of *crêpe*. Turn sides toward center and roll up by turning filled side toward center.

Refrigerate or freeze until required.\*\*\*

When ready to serve, melt the remaining 1 tablespoonful of butter in a large skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat. Slide *blintzes* into skillet and cook, turning frequently, until hot and *evenly browned*—about 10 minutes.

Serve with yogurt or *fat-free* sour cream and jam or fruit sauce, of choice.\*\*

Yields 4 cheese-filled *blintzes*



Notes: \*Because raw eggs present the danger of *Salmonella* poisoning, commercially-available pasteurized eggs are recommended for use in preparing this dish.

\*\*An orange sauce, a blueberry sauce, crushed strawberries, and preserved lingonberries are our special preferences but fruit sauces and preserves generally are most complimentary, whether for dessert or for breakfast.

\*\*\*If frozen, defrost completely in the refrigerator before proceeding.

These may be oven-browned in a well-buttered casserole. Heat at 400 degrees F. for about 10 minutes.

This recipe is easily doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING (exclusive of additional yogurt, sour cream, or fruit sauce) –  
PROTEIN = 11.9 g.; FAT = 9.1 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 17.0 g.;  
CALORIES = 175; CALORIES FROM FAT = 47%

## MIXED BERRY PARFAITS WITH *RICOTTA* – *MASCARPONE* CREAM

TPT - 2 hours and 16 minutes  
2 hours = *ricotta* draining period

*A friend asked me if she could substitute fat-free cream cheese in this recipe. I told her that the intensely rich contrast of the combined cheeses and the fresh berries would be lost. The tongue must sense that contrast to appreciate the tastes. My philosophy is “eat less, enjoy more” and the combination of ricotta and mascarpone cheeses gives this a rich flavor, a flavor I have encountered only in Italy where they would probably carry it to the next level by using whole milk ricotta and heavy cream for such a dessert.*

**2/3 cup part-skimmed milk *ricotta* cheese**

**1/2 cup mixed berries—strawberries, blackberries,  
blueberries, raspberries, etc.—fresh or frozen**  
**2 teaspoons sugar**

**4 teaspoons *mascarpone* cheese**  
**1 tablespoon sugar**  
**1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**  
**4 teaspoons light cream or half and half**

**Sweetened whipped cream, for garnish**

Set a fine sieve over a small bowl or measuring cup. Spoon *ricotta* cheese into the sieve. Refrigerate and allow to drain for 2 hours.



In a mixing bowl, combine berries with the 2 teaspoonfuls sugar. Toss gently. Refrigerate until ready to assemble dessert.\*

In the work bowl of the food processor fitted with steel knife or in the container of the electric blender, combine the drained *ricotta* cheese and *mascarpone* cheese. Process until smooth and all trace of the granular *ricotta* texture is gone. Add sugar, vanilla extract, and cream. Blend until very smooth.

Set up **two parfait glasses**. Spoon a few berries into the bottom of each. Then spoon some of the *ricotta*–*mascarpone* mixture over the berries. Continue alternating berry and cheese layers in each parfait glass.

Garnish with a dollop of whipped cream.

*Serve within an hour* with long-handled iced tea spoons.

Yields 2 individual servings

Notes: \*If using frozen berries, do not refrigerate. Allow to macerate at room temperature.

This recipe is easily halved, when required.

1/2 SERVING (exclusive of whipped cream garnish) –  
PROTEIN = 8.4 g.; FAT = 6.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 9.0 g.;  
CALORIES = 151; CALORIES FROM FAT = 32%

## PURÉED RICOTTA CHEESE SAUCE

### *Salsa di Ricotta Purè*

TPT - 10 minutes;

*I love to serve this creamy, lemony sauce over poached angel hair nests and butter steamed carrots. The flavor and the texture are perfect. This is also a wonderfully different sauce for ravioli or tortellini. A couple of spoonfuls of this sauce over an entrée that has been dressed with a red sauce is a touch that changes everything.*

**1 cup undrained, part-skimmed milk ricotta cheese**  
**2 tablespoons grated pecorino Romano cheese**  
**1 tablespoon grated organic lemon zest**  
**1 tablespoon light cream or half and half**  
**Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

In the work bowl of the food processor fitted with steel knife, combine *ricotta* cheese, *Romano* cheese, lemon zest, cream, and black pepper. Process until *very, very* smooth. Turn into a non-stick-coated saucepan.

Heat over *LOW* heat until just heated through. Turn into a heated sauceboat.

*Serve at once.*

Yields 18 tablespoonfuls

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/6 SERVING (i. e., 3 tablespoonfuls) -  
PROTEIN = 4.6 g.; FAT = 2.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 2.3 g.;  
CALORIES = 57; CALORIES FROM FAT = 43%

## ROASTED RED PEPPER, RICOTTA, AND WALNUT DIP WITH HORSERADISH

TPT - 1 hour and 16 minutes;  
1 hour = flavor development period

*The world of paté is an interesting world to enter. The path to the modern paté or dip is, however, the real adventure. The French claim title to the classic, and somewhat fussy, paté made from forcemeat or fish and shellfish and fat. In France the width and breadth of the animal world can find itself in a terrene or encased in pastry—beef, calves' sweetbreads, veal, lamb, pork, ham, rabbit, chicken, duck, blackbird, thrush, lark, woodcock, pigeon, quail, salmon, lobster, turbot, eel, and, of course, goose livers in the world-famous spread known as paté de foie gras. As the paté moved to the British Isles, it evolved; as vegetarians took up the dish, it evolved further. A paté is an excellent choice for tea or as an appetizer or for part of a picnic spread. I included a favorite British baked mushroom paté in volume I of "A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul," pp. 433-34. It is a particular favorite of ours for the holiday season. As the paté crossed the Atlantic it became a bit more casual. It did not have to be baked in a terrene or sealed in a puffed pastry crust, it could take the stage in a crock or in a small dish to be used as a spread or as a dip fitting, oh so nicely, into our more casual lifestyle.*

**1/4 cup chopped walnuts**

**1 roasted red pepper—cored, seeded, skin removed,  
and well-drained**

**6 tablespoons *part skimmed milk ricotta* cheese**

**1 tablespoon canned, *diced* tomatoes**

**1 teaspoon horseradish sauce**

**2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice**

**Salt, to taste**

**Freshly ground mixed peppercorns—red, white, and  
black—to taste**

Toast walnuts in a 200-degree F. oven until lightly browned and aromatic. Turn into the work bowl of the food processor fitted with steel knife. Process until evenly chopped.

Add roasted red pepper, *ricotta* cheese, *diced* tomatoes, horseradish sauce, and lemon juice. Process until smooth.



Season, to taste, with salt and ground mixed peppercorns. Turn into a small bowl or pack into a crock. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Serve with crackers, toasts, *crudités*, or as a garnish.

Yields about 10 tablespoonfuls

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.



1/10 SERVING (i. e., per tablespoonful) –  
PROTEIN = 1.7 g.; FAT = 3.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 1.9 g.;  
CALORIES = 43; CALORIES FROM FAT = 67%

## **RUSSIAN ORTHODOX EASTER DESSERT**

### *Paskha*

TPT - about 99 hours and 48 minutes;  
48 hours = *ricotta* draining period;  
3 hours = fruit maceration period;  
48 hours = refrigeration period

*In Russia on Orthodox Easter, paskha is accompanied by kulich, the wonderfully fragrant sweet Russian Easter bread. Both are carried to the church on Saturday evening before Easter by the women of the family to be blessed and although the blessing is important, the admiration of women of other families is sought as well. An interesting fact is that only the children, not bound by the fasting rules of the church, judge the taste of the paskha as it is being prepared indebted the cook to the tastebuds of her children. As a result, most Russians are greeted on Easter by paskhas much sweeter than ours.*

*Once we downsized, the large paskha that we had routinely made in a clay flower pot, reserved for that Easter ritual, was too large for us. This version, adapted from the original, is less work for the same glorious taste.*

1 pound *part-skimmed milk ricotta* cheese

1/4 cup mixed, chopped, *preservative-free* dried fruits, of choice, preserved lemon and orange peel, or citron, as preferred

3/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

2 tablespoons sweet (*unsalted*) butter—*softened to room temperature*

2 tablespoons firmly packed *light brown sugar*

1/3 cup heavy whipping cream

1/4 cup *fat-free* pasteurized eggs (the equivalent of 1 egg)\*

1/4 cup chopped *preservative-free* almonds

Whole, unblanched, *preservative-free* almonds, for garnish

*Preservative-free* dried fruit pieces, for garnish



Prepare a **5-inch soufflé dish** by lining with a large, doubled piece of clean, washed culinary cheesecloth. If preferred, a 3 1/2-cup *coeur d' crème* mold can be used quite successfully.

Hang cheese in a culinary cheesecloth bag over a bowl in the refrigerator for 48 hours to drain.

In a small, shallow bowl, combine 1/4 cupful dried fruits, preserved peel, or citron and vanilla extract. Set aside for 3 hours.



Using an electric mixer, cream butter until light and fluffy. Add brown sugar and continue to cream until again fluffy. Add drained cheese and beat until a smooth mixture results. Set aside.

In a heavy, non-stick-coated saucepan set over *LOW* heat or in a double boiler over simmering water, heat heavy whipping cream until bubbles form around the edges.

Using a wire whisk, *gradually—tablespoonful by tablespoonful*—beat the scalded cream into the pasteurized eggs. Return to saucepan and cook over *LOW* heat, *stirring constantly*, until a smooth, thick custard is formed. Beat custard into cheese-butter mixture. When smooth, fold in vanilla-saturated fruits and chopped almonds.

Spoon *paskha* into lined soufflé dish and pack down well. Cover over with cheesecloth. Place a saucer on top (or a heart-shaped cover in the case of the *coeur d' crème* mold) and a 2- or 3-pound weight on top of the saucer. Refrigerate for 2 or 3 days.

Remove weight and saucer. Loosen sides of mold by pulling cheesecloth toward the center slightly and inserting a knife around the edges, if necessary. Turn cheesecloth ends back and invert onto serving plate. *Carefully* peel cheesecloth off molded *paskha*. Press whole almonds and dried fruit pieces into *paskha* to decorate.\*\*

After unmolding, this *paskha* will keep well for about a week, if refrigerated.

Yields 6 servings  
adequate for 4 people

Notes: \*Because raw eggs present the danger of *Salmonella* poisoning, commercially-available pasteurized eggs are recommended for use in preparing this dish.

\*\*Traditionally, the *paskha* is decorated with the letters XB representing “Christ risen.”

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 10.4 g.; FAT = 18.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 16.7 g.;  
CALORIES = 285; CALORIES FROM FAT = 59%



**SPAGHETTINI**  
**WITH SICILIAN EGGPLANT – RICOTTA SAUCE**  
*Spaghettoni alla Norma*

TPT - 1 hour

*One of my future mother-in-law's first questions to me was, "Do you put sugar in your sauce?" "No, I use fresh tomatoes," said I, not adding that if I was Umbrian, I would certainly not add sugar, but I would add honey. Umbria's Sugo Arrabiato, or "angry sauce," is not in everybody's repertoire. It is not a simple sauce, nuanced as it is with the heat of hot peppers, the bite of gingerroot, and the unexpected sweetness of honey. This eggplant sauce is far less complicated and, although it too does not contain sugar, it does express the sweetness of ricotta cheese. In southern Italy and in communities all over the United States where descendants of this flavor-rich area of Italy now live, ricotta cheese is a common addition to certain pasta dishes. Baked ziti and spaghetti with eggplant are still popular dishes that have survived the generations and both show the possibilities of ricotta cheese.*

*The increased availability of mini eggplants has made this classic Sicilian pasta dish one of our favorites all over again. There is no need for salting to reduce bitterness and the seeds are correspondingly small.*

- 1 mini eggplant**
- 1 tablespoon high-heat safflower or sunflower oil**
  
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced onion**
  
- 1 large garlic clove—halved and very thinly sliced**
  
- 3/4 cup canned, diced tomato—well-drained of juice**
- Freshly ground mixed peppercorns—red, white, and black—to taste**
  
- 2 quarts boiling water**
- 4 ounces spaghettoni (thin spaghetti)**
  
- 2 tablespoons part-skimmed milk ricotta cheese**
- 1 tablespoon grated pecorino Romano cheese**
- 5 large fresh basil leaves—sliced into a chiffonade**
  
- Grated pecorino Romano cheese, to garnish**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Peel eggplant and chop into small cubes to yield about 1 cupful.

Spread diced eggplant pieces out in a roasting pan or on a cookie sheet. Sprinkle safflower oil over. Stir to coat eggplant. Bake in preheated 350-degree F. oven until browned on all sides. Stir frequently. Remove from oven and set aside until required.

In a skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat olive oil. Add *thinly* sliced onion. Sauté until onion is soft and translucent, *being careful not to allow onion to brown*.

Add *very thinly* sliced garlic. Sauté for a minute or two more.

Add diced tomatoes, roasted eggplant, and ground mixed peppercorns. Cook, stirring for 15-20 minutes.

Meanwhile, break *spaghettini* in half and add to *boiling* water. Cook according to package directions. Drain. Turn out onto a warmed serving platter.

To tomato–onion sauce base, add *ricotta* cheese, the 1 tablespoonful grated cheese, and basil chiffonade. Stir to combine. Allow to heat through. Turn out on top of cooked *spaghettini*, or, if preferred, serve separately.

*Serve at once*. Pass grated cheese.

Yields 2 main course servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.



1/2 SERVING (exclusive of extra cheese) –  
PROTEIN = 11.7 g.; FAT = 15.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 58.7 g.;  
CALORIES = 423; CALORIES FROM FAT = 32%

In the chapter on Italy in *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish American's Immigrant Soul, Volume I*, I included the follow recipe. For those of you who do not have my books, I will repeat this simple homemade cheese recipe. It is as sweet American-style *ricotta* that rewards in taste and pride.



## ITALIAN HOMEMADE *RICOTTA* CHEESE

### *Ricotta*

TPT - 2 hours and 43 minutes;  
20 minutes =draining period;  
2 hours = chilling period

*The first homemade cheese that I attempted was successful so there was no stopping my attempts to explore this realm of self-sufficiency. From Indian "paneer" I moved to cottage cheese in the form of a Belgian soft white cheese and then I found an uncomplicated recipe for Italian cottage cheese. Since we often serve commercial ricotta cheese as a dessert with a sweet herb syrup, I wondered how it would taste if the ricotta was so fresh that you knew every curd by name.*

**2 quarts whole milk**  
**2 cups cultured buttermilk**

Line a sieve with a double layer of culinary cheesecloth. Set the sieve over a mixing bowl. Set aside until required.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat and fitted with a candy thermometer, combine milk and buttermilk. Cook, stirring constantly, until milk begins to steam. *Stop stirring at this point.* Allow mixture to continue cooking until curds separate from whey at about 175 degrees F. Immediately remove from heat. Using a Chinese skimmer or a slotted spoon, ladle the curd into the cheesecloth-lined sieve. Reserve whey for bread baking or use to feed outdoor plants and/or compost pile. **DO NOT POUR WHEY DOWN YOUR DRAINS IF YOU HAVE A SEPTIC SYSTEM.**

Allow to drain for about 5 minutes. Gather the corners of the cheesecloth and twist gently, *without squeezing the curd*, to form a ball. Secure with a rubber band. Return the balled curd to the sieve and allow to drain for about 20 minutes more, or until the dripping of whey has stopped. Unwrap the cheesecloth and turn the cheese into an airtight container. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours before using.

If tightly covered and refrigerated, the fresh cheese will keep for 3-4 days. Use in any recipe that calls for *ricotta*, cottage, or farmers' cheeses.

Yields about 1 1/2 cupfuls cheese  
and 8 cupfuls whey

Note: This recipe can be doubled successfully but I do prefer to make the smaller amount since it does not keep well.

1/6 SERVING (about 1/4 cupful) –  
PROTEIN = 9.3 g.; FAT = 9.6 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 1.5 g.;  
CALORIES = 133; CALORIES FROM FAT = 6%

## LAVENDER SYRUP

TPT - 51 minutes;  
30 minutes = syrup cooling period

*We harvest and dry a large portion of the lavender in our garden. It's so very simple; it may be the simplest of the herb-grower's seasonal tasks. If you cut the stems, rinse them to remove any hitchhiking insects, clip off any leaves, plunk them in a small vase, and wait about a week, you're done. The blossoms can then be clipped and jarred in a small jelly jar for culinary use or the dried stems can be tied and hung in the linen closet for scent. This syrup is a lovely touch for a fruit dessert or as a dip for great big, ripe berries or as a fragrant sauce for little cakes or scoops of ricotta cheese.*



**1/2 cup sugar**  
**1/2 cup water**  
**1 tablespoon honey—preferably, wildflower honey**  
**1 teaspoon dried, home-grown, spray-free lavender blossoms**

Sterilize two jelly jars, lids and rings.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat, combine sugar, water, honey, and lavender blossoms. Cook, stirring constantly, until sugar is dissolved and syrup has come to the boil. Reduce heat to *MEDIUM*. Continue cooking for about 8 minutes. Syrup should be slightly thickened and the lavender fragrance should be intense. Remove from heat.

Set a funnel lined with a tea strainer or a “gold” coffee filter over the jelly jar. Strain lavender syrup into the sterilized jars, discarding the spent lavender flowers. Allow lavender syrup to cool to room temperature—about 30 minutes.

Seal jars and store in refrigerator until required.\*

Yields about 2/3 cupful syrup

Notes: \*In a sterilized jar, this syrup will keep in the refrigerator for several months.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

The recipe can be adapted to create dessert sauces scented with lemon balm, lemon verbena, mint, pineapple sage, or scented geranium; basil, rosemary, sage, and thyme; roses and violets.

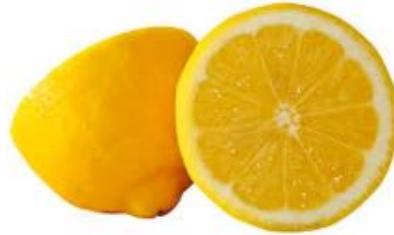
1/20 SERVING (per tablespoonful) –  
PROTEIN = 0.01 g.; FAT = 0.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 12.9 g.;  
CALORIES = 50; CALORIES FROM FAT = 0%

## LEMON SYRUP

TPT - 51 minutes;  
30 minutes = syrup cooling period

*Every year I make a dessert syrup from the lemon verbena, *Aloysia triphylla*, which I grow as an annual in our Zone 5 herb garden. For several months we enjoy its lemony taste but sooner or later it is all gone. The remainder of the winter and into the spring this lemon syrup takes over. The sweet syrup has a zillion uses but I love it most with dessert pancakes, or over fresh ricotta, sliced fruits, berries, and pound cake.*

**1 cup sugar**  
**6 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice**  
**1/2 cup water**  
**2 tablespoons honey—preferably, wildflower honey**  
**A two-inch strip of organic lemon zest**  
**1/8 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**



Sterilize a jelly jar, lid, and ring.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat, combine sugar, lemon juice, water, honey, and lemon zest. Cook, stirring constantly, until sugar is dissolved and syrup has come to the boil. Reduce heat to *MEDIUM*. Continue cooking for about 8 minutes. Syrup should be slightly thickened and the lemon fragrance should be intense. Remove from heat.

Stir in vanilla extract.

Set a funnel lined with a tea strainer or a “gold” coffee filter over the jelly jar. Strain lemon syrup into the sterilized jar, discarding the lemon zest. Allow syrup to cool to room temperature—about 30 minutes.

Seal jar and store in refrigerator until required.\*

Yields about 1 1/4 cupfuls syrup

Notes: \*In a sterilized jar, this syrup will keep in the refrigerator for several months.

This recipe can be halved, when required.

1/20 SERVING (per tablespoonful) –  
PROTEIN = 0.01 g.; FAT = 0.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 13.2 g.;  
CALORIES = 51; CALORIES FROM FAT = 0%

## MAPLE – SPICE SAUCE

TPT - 10 minutes

*This is a useful sweet sauce with a touch of coffee for depth. It is a wonderful garnish for a scoop of ricotta cheese, small cakes, ice cream, and fruits, especially pears.*

**6 tablespoons pure maple syrup**  
**3 tablespoons *fat-free* sweetened condensed milk**  
**1 1/2 tablespoons butter**  
**1/2 teaspoon freeze-dried coffee granules**  
**1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**1/4 teaspoon ground allspice**

In a small saucepan or Turkish coffee pot, combine maple syrup, sweetened condensed milk, butter, coffee granules, ground cinnamon, and ground allspice. Stir to combine thoroughly. Set on a warming tray until ready to serve. Turn into a small serving bowl.

*Serve warm or at room temperature. Stir before serving.*

Yields about 10 tablespoonfuls

Note: This recipe can be halved or doubled, when required.

1/10 SERVING (per tablespoonful) –  
PROTEIN = 0.5 g.; FAT = 1.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 11.4 g.;  
CALORIES = 63; CALORIES FROM FAT = 27%

*If you tried the lavender syrup in this month's column,  
you may be eager to explore edible flowers or  
if you are a fan already of the culinary uses for flowers and anxious for more ideas,  
next month we'll do just that.  
Drop by and plan your culinary flower garden with me.*

*Judy*

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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